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SIPDIS

PASS TO USTR AND STATE FOR AF/S

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZA](#)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT BANDA OPENS PARLIAMENT

REF: LUSAKA 44

Classified By: Ambassador Donald E. Booth for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (U) President Rupiah Banda opened Fourth Session (2010 Session) of the Zambian Parliament September 18. His extensive (one hour, 45 minute) address included passages noting cooperation with the USG on economic development through the African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the Millennium Challenge Account. He acknowledged the U.S.-Zambian bilateral economic partnership and mutual efforts to promote economic growth and reduce poverty. Although the United States was the only cooperating partner Banda acknowledged during his speech, he noted that Zambia's economic diplomacy is attracting investment from Asia and Europe. He further stated that GRZ continues to "pursue her trade agenda by working with partners within the regional framework of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC)." There was also reference to focusing tourism promotion efforts in Asia.

¶2. (SBU) In his comments on commerce, trade, and industry, Banda said, "Under AGOA, the Governments of Zambia and the United States of America have agreed to establish a technical working group to work out measures that will help expand and diversify trade between the two countries. This should be taken full advantage of to be beneficial." (NOTE: President Banda appears to be referring to an effort led by USTR to discuss ways to expand bilateral trade and investment, which he hopes will lay the groundwork for a Bilateral Investment Treaty at a later date. END NOTE.)

¶3. (U) Banda referred to Zambia's recent qualification for a Millennium Challenge Account Compact, noting that he "recently launched the Millennium Challenge Account-Zambia -- a program being supported by the Government of the United States of America through the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) -- to countries that consistently meet the standards in the area of good governance, investing in people and promoting economic freedom. Zambia will have access to substantial grant resources to be applied in projects that will promote economic growth and poverty reduction once it signs the compact."

¶4. (SBU) Banda also asserted his government's commitment to good governance, respect for basic freedoms, and commitment to economic reform. His assertions were met with derisive outbursts from the opposition benches.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: Banda's acknowledgment of U.S.-Zambian bilateral relations at parliament's opening session was in marked contrast to the opening of the last session of Parliament (ref A) in which he recognized virtually all of Zambia's partners except the United States. As omission of reference to the U.S. at the last opening of parliament was explained as a simple oversight, we would not read any great significance into his lack of specific reference to other

partners in today's opening address. In fact, the "Foreign Policy" section of his address was limited to noting his assumption of International Conference on the Great Lakes Region chairmanship and Zambia's selection as a member of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defense and Security troika. END COMMENT.
BOOTH